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BENT
True stories of Disabled Gay Men:
BENT aims to provoke, delight, amaze and offend you.
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bent voices

FOUR POEMS

by
Chris Hewitt

• • • •

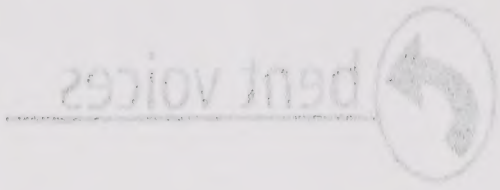
LOVE'S FOOLISHNESS

1.

I sit by the window in a Castro café
and watch the men passing by.
None of them, I think, is as
handsome, sexy, well-dressed, stylish, elegant, talented,
intelligent, educated
and interesting as you.
And yet, only six months ago,
one of them *was* you.

2.

After we make love,
I think it will never be this good again.
And next time it is even better
and I ask you, "Is there ecstasy
beyond ecstasy?" And you turn to me
and say quite simply, "Sure, baby.
With us, anything is possible."
"You're nuts," I say.
But the next time it is better still
and I think, "Sex is definitely underrated," and I say,
"I wish I'd met you thirty years ago."
"Better late than never," you say,



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"Better late than never," you say.

And we make love until we fall asleep,
big smiles on our lips.

3.

One night you leant over and unexpectedly
kissed my ankle very softly.
It was a tender moment.
How I loved you then—a swell
of feeling making my eyes water,
my heart race.
Ever since, I've valued my right ankle
more than any other of my body parts.
By now you've kissed almost all of me.
How alive I feel, how attractive.
My friends say I just glow.
Why couldn't I feel this way
before I met you?
I was the same guy after all.
But I wasn't the same guy.
Now I wear a secret smile—
passersby recognize that on me.
I see it on some of *them*.
"Oh, you're just in love," says a friend, yawning.
"Really?" I say. "You really think so?"

• • • •

NEWLY BLIND

I am a man of taste and have
many lovely things around
my house. My friends would say
that all my life I've cultivated
beauty far too much—handsome friends,
dashing lovers—sometimes I think
that's why I'm doomed no more to
see. Now I have to search
for beauty that's within.
Seeing with the heart is hard.
I fear I'll never learn the art,
be confined to quick encounters,
helped and helpers. I cannot tell
if they are ugly or have charming faces,

NEWLY BLIND

* * * *

"Really?" I say. "You really think so?"
"Oh, you're just in love," says a friend, reviewing
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passersby recognize that on me.
Now I wear a secret smile—
But I wasn't the same guy after all.
I was the same guy after all
before I met you?
Why complain? I feel this way
My friends say I just glow.
How strong I feel now, attractive.
By now you've kissed almost all of me.
more than any other of my body parts.
Ever since. I've relived my night walks
my heart race.
of feeling watching my eyes water.
How I loved you then—a swell
It was a touch moment.
kissed my sultry very soft.
One night you leant over and nuzzled softly

3

pig snuffles on our lips.
And we make love really we till asleep.

those who guide me over crosswalks,
into elevators, down into the
subway. I cannot sense if,
could I see them, they'd be
the ones I'd trust,
though some I get to talking with,
exchanging numbers. I have to go by
timbre of voice, by delicacy
of touch.

First published in *Cimarron Review*

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THE FAVORITE PLACE

You look at the absence
at my side—the air that might have been an arm,
the sleeve of emptiness
neatly pinned.
You are curious—I imagine—
as to how I lost it:
Was I born without it?
Was I right-handed?
And do men not ask me out
because of it?
Have I had children and, if so,
could I tend to them as a mother should?
My face is good you notice and I
have nice long legs. I might
have been a model but all because a
lover left me at eighteen
I tried to throw myself
under a train
and missed.
They found the arm on the platform;
at the hospital they tried to sew
it back but the flesh didn't take;
and I was cut off too high up
for prosthesis:
I learned to write left-handed,
I carried my babies
in the crook of my left arm;
I do have sex, thank you, and my

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into elevators, down into the
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it back but the flesh didn't take;
and I was cut off too high up
for prosthesis.
I learned to write left-handed,
I carried my babies
in the crook of my left arm;
I do have sex, thank you, and my

husband has no complaints.
Sometimes he kisses the space where
my arm used to be and says "This place
is my favorite: because of this I hold
you especially mine; you are whole and
you are beautiful as if you had been
born this way.

• • • •

THE LIFTING TEAM

Recently in the hospital,
and in great pain
from broken bones
after an accident,
I had to be lifted:
bed to gurney, gurney to
x-ray table (brutally hard) table to chair.

Each time they sent for the Lifting Team:
Solomon, built like a football-player with
a wide smile, and Merwin, smaller, agile,
a savvy bird. Each time Solomon would say,
(seeing the tenseness of fear on my face),
"Don't worry, you'll be alright."
Indeed, their arms held me in a firm cocoon,
I never felt the slightest pain.

When in death's last delirium,
I shall call on the Lifting Team.
They will arrive as angels at my bedside,
and Solomon will say, "Don't worry, you'll be alright."
And they will halt my ghastly nose-dive into hell,
and lift me up, up, high up
into the fields of stars.

■

CHRIS HEWITT lives in San Francisco, where he teaches and reads his poetry regularly. His poetry and

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translations have been published in *The New Yorker, The Advocate, American Poetry Review, and The James White Review*. Chris has *osteogenesis imperfecta*, "Brittle Bone Disease."

BENT: A Journal of CripGay Voices/January 2001

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Hewitt

Four Poems by Chris Hewitt (Bent), 2001.

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